

Where Our Naval Officers Are Trained

A lieutenant's wife writes about life at Annapolis Academy, and tells especially about the work which Mrs. Gabrielle Jackson is doing as "Little Mother" to the young midshipmen there



HERE is no more important unit of preparedness for our national defense than the United States Naval Academy. The American people are today making no better investment for the future, come peace or war, than in the education and training of the men whose professional ability and personal integrity we must one day trust for the efficiency of the fleet, but whose lives and traditions are less understood by the people than almost any group of men in the country." Thus writes M. Keiton in the New York Sun. She continues: "The American people are unrepresented before congress by the brains they are taxed to train and upon which they must rely to protect the national honor."

"Come with me through the Maryland avenue gate of the academy, past the midshipmen of the guard and let us look out at the world with the spirit and being of the service back of us and through the eyes of the boys who are among the least appreciated of our national resources but who constitute the backbone of our potential preparedness; for preparedness is not to bring on war, not to preserve the peace; it is for the purpose of giving the country a reasonable surety of success in war."

"Our first shore duty was at the naval academy. My husband, then a lieutenant, reported in the department of mathematics and I set valiantly to work to make our quarters at least habitable. Government furniture has an exasperating way of representing the combined tastes of a long line of former occupants."

"We were assigned to a top floor flat in Goldsborough row, the one where Admiral Theodore Porter's daughter wrote her name with a diamond on a window pane when she was a child and he but a lieutenant. Admiral Benson, our present chief of operations, lived in the same flat and doubtless endured remnants of the same furniture when he was an ensign. The midshipmen called the old place the Corralle and sometimes the Incubators—youth dwellers! The whole row is gone now to make way for a green lawn, but its memories will go out only with the last of the sons who peopled the shabby rooms."

"I think it must be this succession of people facing at different times the same problems and difficulties, stepping actually into each other's footsteps in work and play, which gives us that splendid spirit of the service, the warm brotherhood of thought and action that no outsider may really understand. It begins with the plebe class in the academy and goes on down a man's life till he is struck off the list forever and its warmth is his children's heritage. It is the unspoken generosity of the upper-class men at the academy to lend a hand to youngsters (third-class men) or plebe alike. It begins in discipline and ends in justice."

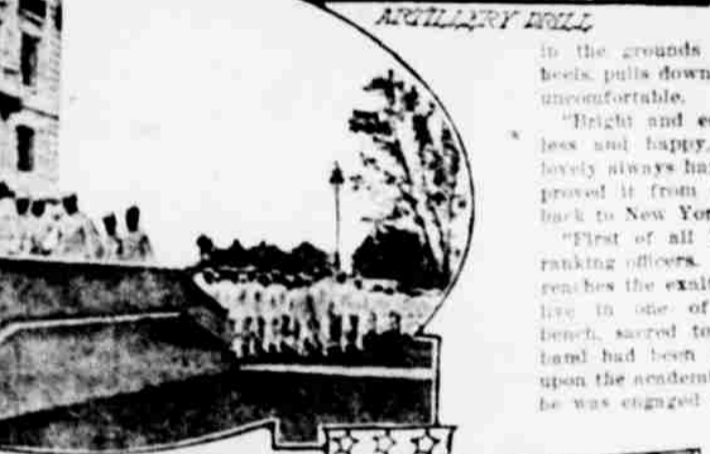
"It is the co-operation of officer with men. It stands behind our guns and sweetens in the stoker's bell. It is the chap who stays aboard to take another fellow's duty that some waiting wife may be happy, some child discover that the photograph he is taught to call father isn't just a make-believe. It is more than any other one thing, fleet efficiency. Its steady, unchanging existence is the argument against which politicians' errors break like froth. It is our safeguard for protection and against militarism."

"My father had never let me visit the naval academy as a girl for fear I might marry a naval officer, so I looked forward to meeting my first midshipman with a curious flareback of youth, almost as if I were to see them through the eyes of a girl. I had determined when we went to duty at the academy to have a home place for the boys who were not invited out very much. My husband told me once long years ago, when I had gone all the way from Boston to Gibraltar to be with him for four days, that no one had ever asked him out to a single meal at the time he was at the academy."

"I never forgot that little confidence or the look in his eyes, and when I picked my first midshipman to invite to our quarters it was because he said 'Yes, ma'am' to me and didn't know what to do with his hands."

"The Sunday after S. reported we went to chapel in the academy. We were seated well back and in the shadow of one of the side balconies. It was infinitely quiet there, the very light held a quality of silence and the rows and rows of empty pews beneath the splendid dome seemed to be waiting tensely with me for some expected sound."

"I looked up into the rapidly filling balconies. So many girls, so young and eager, men and women, town folk and visitors. Then, as my



glance wandered, I made out in the dimness of the organ loft the figure of a tiny woman. She was leaning forward and I could tell by her alert watchfulness that she, too, was waiting with me and the quiet church for a breaking of the silence.

"The seats about us were filled now with officers and their families. The midshipmen of the choir sat motionless in the chancel. Zimmerman, the band master, stood silently along the organ bench. There was a turning of heads, an instant's heavy pause, and then the quick, sharp crash of men marching on stone, an inrush of sweet air through the open doors, short, high commands, and to the triumph of 'Forward, Christian Soldiers!' in their marching, youth and life, ambition and hope, courage and discipline."

"I had thought to see them through the eyes of a girl, for I was only twenty-two, but the blurred sight of those 600 shining young heads, the straight, strong bodies in all their bravery of full dress uniforms, the knowledge that discipline had marched them to church when most of them wanted to be free and out of doors, awakened in me a sense of them I have never since lost. They needed a home and a mother, and but few of them realized how the iron arm of the navy department would separate them from both. You'll understand presently; but first let me take you out of the quiet chapel into the earnest business of Sunday liberty."

"The broad shallow steps are massed with uniforms crowding up to meet the frocks and flowers coming down and far out under the splendid trees and along Love lane the midshipmen wait to be joined by friends or family. All too many have neither living near enough to come to them, and these stand in groups or move off toward Bancroft hall, which is quarters for the entire brigade. There goes my little lady of the organ loft, completely swamped by 20 or more young giants and more come hurrying toward her along Chapel walk. I do not remember seeing in all my life so happy a face as hers."

"The gay picture breaks up, the people scatter and presently the streets of Annapolis are thronged with hurrying, boisterous, laughing youths all moving dinnerward. It is a pathetic thing, in its very joyousness, those young men children trying to make the most of a few short hours of liberty. Many homes are thrown open to them on liberty days, both out in town and among the officers, but comparatively few boys are reached in this way."

"Annapolis has no Y. M. C. A., no club, no place of amusement, no place of any kind where free-

den from routine discipline may be had openly and in order and with the sanction of the authorities. Carvel hall, the one possible hotel, the Peppes Stewart hotel and a few boarding houses must be the meeting place for friends and family, and perched on their stairs, overlooking into halls and onto stairs dining saloons and filling benches and tables are the mothers of the midshipmen, waiting for their boys to come home from routine discipline.

"Bright and early of a Monday morning, but less and happy, I went exploring. Something lovely always happens to me when I explore. I've proved it from Hongkong to the Bahamas and back to New York."

"First of all I inspected the quarters of the ranking officers. Some day if my lieutenant ever reaches the exalted rank of commander we might live in one of these houses. I sat on the bench, sacred to first-class men where my husband had been as a boy of nineteen. I gazed upon the academic building where at that moment he was engaged in subsiding 10 piches. I sat in Love lane and watched motion after motion, parched by the radiation and thanked my Maker I did not have to study what they did."

"A nice fellow had joined me, and we wandered off to look at the old statue of Tecumseh and of Washington, passing back, who must be kissed by all pebbles if they hope to get through the academy. There was a flight of stone steps leading over the terrace to the lecture courts below. Two and I went down and there under the single great willow tree sat my very first lady of the organ loft. A soft, faint glances met mine, but you can't talk to that there lady; it's just a stare. She was there and waits and there she sits, one to disturb her."

"But I began. Friend and I could hear her laugh. 'Did you want to speak to me?' she asked me. 'Every man wants to speak to me,' said the departing and departed Jimmie boys."

"We were friends before I had sat down under her tree, and would you believe it, I'd known her all my life because she wrote 'Doris' and 'Ned Toodles' in St. Nicholas, and I think that makes her partly belong to me."

"Have you any children? I asked. 'Yes, my dear,' she replied crisply, 'one daughter and about 800 sons in uniform.'"

"So, here was the mother of midshipmen, a tiny, alert figure, young eyes, face lined by years of physical pain and the heart and soul of her in every tone of voice and expression of her screwed-up forehead."

"That was the beginning. Since then, all down the years I have seen Gabrielle Jackson's honored friend and watched her work for her boys against the odds of delicate health, constant physical suffering and slender means. Her little sitting room in Carvel hall, dubbed 'Sax' parlor in its early days, is the meeting place for all her sons, plebes and first-class men alike. There are no 'rates' there, and all she asks is that they shall come to her and let her be their little mother."

"There is an open fire to stoke, big chairs, a tea table to mess with a warmth of love no boy should ever miss, no matter how good for him the discipline and through the week may be. Midshipmen of the first class have only 20 hours of liberty in a whole week and a plebe but five and a half. What wonder that they long for a home place in which to spend the precious hours."

"For nine years 'Sax' parlor has been a home to all who wish to come, with or without introduction or invitation, and only three times has Mrs. Jackson been forced to say, 'Son, I am sorry but remember the open sesame to Sax parlor must be clean living and high standards, and having forgotten this I think, for the sake of those who have not forgotten. It would be wiser for you to give up your visits here.'"

"Commandant and officers are glad of her co-operation, for discipline and drills, strict orders and hard work may turn out many a fine officer, but it does not always reach and help a naturally fine but high strung nature."

"This is Gabrielle Jackson's work."

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Alice—Is she fitted to hold any office?
Mary—Yes, the office that seeks the man—Town Topics.

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Differing Views.
He (reading the paper)—There's a big three-back coming.
She—Four two! And I was sure I saw where all the new skirts were to hang straight.

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Practical Joke With a Moral.
"What has become of the man who used to rock the boat?"
"He took a chance to my boy Josh," replied Farmer Fortnessen. "You see, Josh came here to school. Josh he and a cradle he strapped that fellow into it and everybody took their oath that he kept rock in to his heart's content."

A GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

Mr. F. C. Case of Wellesboro, Lake, Pa., writes: "I suffered with back ache and kidney trouble. My head ached, my sleep was broken and unrefreshing. I felt heavy and weary after meals, was always nervous and tired, had a bitter taste in my mouth, was dizzy, had floating specks before my eyes, was always thirsty, had a dragging sensation across my loins, difficulty in collecting my thoughts and was troubled with shortness of breath. DODDS KIDNEY PILLS have cured me of these complaints. You are at liberty to publish this letter for the benefit of any sufferer who doubts the merit of DODDS KIDNEY PILLS."

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The Brighter Side.
"Was your little girl in the country, a shoe?"
"It was from my point of view," answered Mr. Dopper.
"How was that?"
"The auto broke down so we got caught in the rain, a bus came and the children and I together we had a sunny accident. I don't believe Mrs. Dopper will insist on another outing in the country for at least 12 months."

In Doubt.
"Tell me what you eat and I'll tell you what you are."
"Here are some of my wife's cooking-school menus. I ought to be a human ostrich, but I feel I'm not."

How It Happened.
"Mrs. Jiffway sewing a button a great deal about Mrs. Emerson's affairs." "Quite true?"
"How could I tell? When they are not on speaking terms?"
"The explanation is very simple. On a certain spring morning of this year some woman more or less familiar with Mrs. Jiffway's affairs, visited at Mrs. Jiffway's home, installed in telephone, and connected it with a party who?"

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The Exception.
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